

## Message Text

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PAGE 01     DACCA 04999 231107Z

22

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

DHA-02 MCT-01 /061 W

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R 231005Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2198

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BG

SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITY, PHASE I

REF: DACCA 4588

1. IN THE PAST THREE WEEKS, FORTY-SIX POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE SUBMITTED PARTY CONSTITUTIONS AND ELECTION MANIFESTOS TO THE BDG AS REQUIRED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES REGULATION (PPR). ON SEPTEMBER 22 THE BDG ANNOUNCED ACCEPTANCE OF DOCUMENTS FROM FIVE PARTIES WHILE THOSE OF SEVENTEEN OTHERS WERE RETURNED FOR CHANGES PRIOR TO RESUBMISSION. THOSE CHOOSING TO MAKE THE CHANGES AND RESUBMITTING DOCUMENTS PRESUMABLY WILL ALSO BE APPROVED. DOCUMENTS OF THE REMAINING PARTIES ARE STILL UNDER SCRUTINY. THE FIVE PERMITTED PARTIES ARE:

- (1) THVE NAP/B, LED BY MASHIUR RAHMAN
- (2) THE BANGLADESH MVUSLIM LEAGUE, LED BY KHAN A. SABUR
- (3) THE BANGLADESH JATIYO LEAGUE, LED BY ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN
- (4) THE BANGLADESH PEOPLE'S LEAGUE, LED BY DR. ALEEM AL-RAZEE
- (5) THE BANGLADESH DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE, LED BY KHANDAKER V

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PAGE 02     DACCA 04999 231107Z

MUSHTAQUE AHMED.

2. EVEN BEFORE ANY POLITICAL PARTY WAS ACCEPTED, HOWEVER, THE FIRST POLITICAL CONTROVERSY ERUPTED. ON SEPTEMBER 12, AT AN AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE ON HIS RETURN FROM LONDON WHERE HE RECEIVED MEDICAL TREATMENT, MAULANA ABDUL HAMID KHAN BHASHANI SUGGESTED THAT THE BDG OUGHT TO CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE COUNTRY AND TO RESTORE LAW AND ORDER RATHER THAN TO WORRY ABOUT HOLDING ELECTIONS. HE URGED INSTEAD THAT A DRAFT CONSTITUTION BE ADOPTED BY NATIONAL REFERENDUM. HIS COMMENT WAS CHALLENGED BY A HOST OF

ANGRY POLITICIANS. TYPICAL OF THE REMARKS WAS THAT OF KHAN A. SABUR, WHO SAID "THE DEMAND FOR A REFERENDUM WAS OBVIOUSLY INTENDED TO THWART PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER TO ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES." OTHERS ALSO NOTED THAT BHASHANI CALLED FOR A DELAY IN ELECTIONS IN THE FALL OF 1970. HIS MOTIVE THEN WAS THOUGHT TO BE A DESIRE TO AVOID THE TROUNCING WHICH THE NAP/B EVENTUALLY RECEIVED; HIS MOTIVE NOW MAY BE THE SAME.

3. RESPONDING TO THE ATTACK, KAZI ZAFAR AHMED, ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE UNITED PEOPLES PARTY, A RADICAL LEFT OFF-SHOOT OF THE NAP/B, REPLIED SEPTEMBER 21 THAT FIRST SHOULD COME "RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE" AND THEN ONLY "A NATIONAL CONVENTION TO DECIDE WHETHER THE ELECTION SHOULD BE HELD UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES." ZAFAR SUGGESTED FURTHER THAT SABUR HAD NO RIGHT TO CRITICIZE THE MAULANA BECAUSE "THOSE WHO HAD OPPOSED THE INDEPENDENCE OF BANGLADESH ... AND WERE ACTIVE IN CONSPIRING AGAINST THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY HAD NO RIGHTS TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS OF THE COUNTRY." ZAFAR ALSO DEMANDED AN INVESTIGATION CONCERNING THE ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF FORMER PRESIDENT KHANDAKER MUSHTAQUE AHMED IN THE MURDERS AT DACCA JAIL LAST NOVEMBER. LINKING MUSHTAQUE WITH THE FOUR ASSASSINATED LEADERS, ZAFAR SUGGESTED THAT TOGETHER THEY HAD MADE AGREEMENTS WHICH "WERE INTENDED TO SELL THE COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY TO THE FORCES OF EXPANSIONISM" (READ INDIA). IN ANOTHER SECTION, ZAFAR ALSO ACCUSED THE BAKSALITES (A VAGUE TERM GENERALLY REFERRING TO PAST SUPPORTERS OF SHEIK MUJIB) OF BEING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03     DACCA 04999 231107Z

"ANTI-DEMOCRATIC."

4. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MOST OF THE FORTY-SIX POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS ARE WHISTLING IN THE WIND. EVEN IF THEIR CONSTITUTIONS ARE EVENTUALLY ACCEPTED, THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY NOMINATE CANDIDATES ONLY IN ONE OR TWO DISTRICTS. ALTHOUGH MANY POLITICIANS HERE IN DACCA ORIGINALLY SUGGESTED THAT THE BDG HAD PROMULGATED

THE STRICT PPR IN THE HOPE OF ENCOURAGING BROAD COALITIONS  
INSTEAD OF INTENSE POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION, IT STRIKES US  
THAT THE MORE SPECIFIC A PARTY CONSTITUTION MUST BE, THE MORE  
LIKELY FACTIONALISM IS TO RESULT. THEREFORE, THE NUMBER OF  
PARTIES SUBMITTING CONSTITUTIONS IS NOT SURPRISING.

5. THE VITRIOLIC TONE OF THE CONTROVERSY OVER WHETHER  
EVEN TO HOLD ELECTIONS MAKES AN IMPLICIT CHALLENGE TO THE  
PPR PROVISIONS BANNING "PREJUDICIAL" COMMENTS AGAINST THE  
OPPOSITION. GENERAL ZIA HAS NOT YET INDICATED WHETHER  
HE CONSIDERS THIS A CHALLENGE AND, IF SO, HOW HE WILL RESPOND.;  
CHESLAW

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